

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Friday, May 11, 2007

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The Daily Telegram

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FRIDAY MAY 11, 2007 Last modified: *Thursday, May 10, 2007 4:35 PM EDT*

Charges joined in day care sex case

The prosecution and defense in the case of Douglas Jay Clark agree to a single trial.

By [Dennis Pelham](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — Plans were discussed Wednesday to go ahead with an August trial in Lenawee County Circuit Court on 76 charges involving six victims of child sex abuse at an Adrian daycare center.

“We don’t have any objection to that,” said public defender John Glaser, who is representing Douglas Jay Clark, the owner of Guardian Family Daycare. Clark allegedly videotaped himself sexually abusing infants at the home-based business on Erie Street.

Clark, 52, has been in jail since he was arrested at the start of an Adrian police investigation in early March. His bond was set at \$5 million at that time.

Clark did not speak during the brief hearing Wednesday before Judge Harvey A. Koselka to work out how to handle the long list of cases.

Glaser and assistant Lenawee County prosecutor Jonathan Poer agreed to combine 11 separate cases that include a total of 76 felony charges for a single jury trial because of the difficulties and time that would be involved in holding separate trials. Poer said the same testimony would likely be presented at separate trials because he will ask to call witnesses to “similar acts” to show a common pattern of behavior that would support the prosecution’s case.

Koselka asked the attorneys to come up with an estimate of how long a single trial with consolidated charges will take.

“If we’re going to consolidate them it could take two weeks or more,” Koselka said.

A July 11 hearing date was scheduled to decide how much time to block out for a jury trial that is now set to begin on Aug. 1.

The only charge filed against Clark that is not included in the trial is one count of possession of marijuana with intent to deliver. Adrian police reported finding marijuana in Clark’s home they allege was intended for sale.

Glaser said the marijuana case is the least of Clark’s worries at this point.

Seventy of the charges are first- and second-degree criminal sexual conduct involving alleged abuse of children at the day care center, most of them infants who police said were videotaped by Clark.

A “not guilty” plea was entered on behalf of Clark last week when he was arraigned.

Charges were initially filed in March in district court. A preliminary examination to determine if there is sufficient

evidence to support the charges was waived by Clark on April 20 and the cases sent to circuit court for trial. No plea bargain negotiations have been mentioned during court appearances so far.

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Friday, May 11, 2007

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Pending legislation would allow income tax filers to automatically donate money into four new funds.

Gary Heinlein / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- Michigan's income tax checkoff funds raise big money -- so big that lawmakers are working on bills to add four more of them.

Pending legislation would let Michiganians, while filing their state tax returns, contribute toward prostate or breast cancer research, animal welfare and low-income housing. That would give them seven charitable options, plus support of the gubernatorial election fund.

"This is becoming more popular," said Sen. Patricia Birkholz, R-Saugatuck, sponsor of the breast cancer proposal.

Checkoffs typically raise \$500,000 to \$1.5 million a year for the charities they support, the House Fiscal Agency says.

Treasury spokesman Terry Stanton said department officials support the new legislation.

"But if you have seven of them, you probably don't expect you'd get \$1 million for each," he said.

Birkholz's proposal would set the new minimum contribution at \$5 per taxpayer, and allow Treasury officials to dump any checkoff that failed to raise at least \$100,000 in each of two consecutive years.

Three checkoffs already on tax forms--child abuse prevention, tuition grants to children of deceased or disabled soldiers, and relief to reservists' families-- have generated more than \$15 million.

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**Birkholz****Tax checkoffs**

On the ballot now: a children's trust fund; a tuition grant fund for military veterans' children; and a relief fund for families of military reservists.

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Of that, \$14 million went to child abuse prevention. It was on the tax form from 1983 through 1999, taken off from 2000-04, and reinstated in 2005.

The reservists' family fund first went on 2004 returns. The tuition fund, which goes to the Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority for grants of up to \$2,800, was new in 2006.

Donations are added to what the taxpayer owes, or are deducted from the taxpayer's refund. They're not to be confused with \$3 election checkoffs. Those, which go into a state campaign fund for gubernatorial candidates who agree to election spending limits, don't affect a taxpayer's tax liability. The money comes from the treasury.

You can reach Gary Heinlein at (517)371-3660 or gheinlein@detnews.com.

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Proposed:

Prostate cancer research: to provide grants to Michigan medical schools and hospitals as matching funds for federal grants or grants from the National Cancer Institute.

Amanda's Fund/breast cancer research: administered by the Department of Community Health for research, early detection and public education.

Animal welfare: to provide grants for shelters, equipment, sterilization of dogs and cats and publicity about animal care.

Housing/community development: to provide mortgage loans, construction loans, bridge loans and other financial support for single-family and multiple-family low-income housing.

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Bills Leave Foster Kids With Families

MIRS, May 10, 2007

Rep. Gino **POLIDORI** (D-Dearborn) today introduced a plan that would try to place more foster children with relatives when possible. The plan also provides a preference for placement with foster families of the same religion.

The plan would require a child entering foster care to be placed with a relative if a fit and willing relative can be located. It would also assist Department of Human Services (DHS) employees in efforts to locate relatives for potential foster placement.

The plan also would provide a preference for placement with families of the same religion as the child. The bills include **HB 4735**, **HB 4736** and **HB 4737**.



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Published May 11, 2007

Helene Ellis: Kinship families could use help

Helene Ellis lives in Haslett.

In this month of celebrating the elders among us, let us not forget those who have taken on incredible tasks of raising children again in their senior years.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census 2,426,730 grandparents were raising more than 6 million grandchildren in a grandparent head of household. An additional 1.5 million other relatives are raising their nieces, nephews, cousins or younger siblings.

In Michigan, more than 73,000 grandfamilies are raising almost 185,000 children; 2,200 neighboring families in the Capital City area alone.

Think of that - more than 70,000 families in Michigan who have taken on the responsibility to raise almost 200,000 Michigan grandchildren. Most of these children are not in the expensive foster care system. The kinship families are expected to care for the children with very little assistance from anyone else. The children are expected to do well in school and become productive citizens. The impact on families is terrific.

Though there are many reasons seniors are called on for this task - parental absence due to military service, debilitating illness, death, consequences of poverty, or substance abuse - it is the grandparents and other relatives who catch the child when social ills strike the family.

Several studies show that children living with relatives are more secure, do better in school and feel better about themselves. The same study, however, shows that grandparents raising grandchildren are at greater risk of depression than their counterparts.

Imagine the situation - social services contacts you to care for two of your grandchildren. Of course, you say, you love them. Yet suddenly you are overwhelmed with not only the regular duties and costs of raising children, but also the public systems involved.

Your insurance won't cover the children, so you get a Medicaid card for them and possibly a small stipend of about \$100 a month for both children. You must travel, possibly several miles, to a doctor who accepts Medicaid. At today's gas prices and a couple of gallons of milk a week, the costs are much greater than you expected. Maybe, you think, you can take your blood pressure medicine every other day to save a little money.

Then there is the need to acquire guardianship so that the children can enter school and get medical help. More costs for legal counsel.

Meanwhile the state is not paying for the children to be in foster care, as much as \$500 a month per child.

Some legislators have recognized the dollar value of kinship families. State Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman, D-Detroit, has introduced Senate Bill 170, which could provide about two-thirds of the

amount of foster care to eligible kinship families. Like a child in a troubled family, the bill will likely wait quietly for the political noise to calm down.

Meanwhile, grandparents and other kinship caregivers continue to support traumatized children providing safe and loving homes, receiving little acknowledgment of the effort involved in their intense parenting experience. Grandparents who take on parenting again are a treasure to Michigan.

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When does it stop?

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By Cornelius Fortune

Cornelius Fortune

Published on 05/10/2007

The house on Mansfield on the west side of Detroit is empty.

There is not a trace left of the violence that erupted weeks ago, which claimed the lives of Darren Johnson, 11, and Orlando Herron, 13.

The house on Mansfield

The house on Mansfield on the west side of Detroit is empty.

There is not a trace left of the violence that erupted weeks ago, which claimed the lives of Darren Johnson, 11, and Orlando Herron, 13.

It is a quiet street.

Most of the neighbors stay indoors, not so much from fear, but from habit. This is how things have always been for Mansfield residents.

What's remarkable about this neighborhood is how peaceful it appears, but in reality according to an unnamed source, there have been a few robberies by teenagers in the neighborhood – robberies, but no shootings.

No one knows why Darren and Orlando were killed. A hit was put out on a cousin of the two youngsters, 23-year-old Ronell Thompson, in an attempt to get drugs and money. The others in the house survived, but not the boys.

Neighbors are still trying to make sense of the senseless killings.

Maria Riecchia, an Italian immigrant, has lived in this neighborhood for 45 years. She lives with her husband and was recently robbed while away from home. She speaks broken English, but expressed her outrage quite clearly.

"They stole all of my family jewelry. Why they can't find a job, work someplace?" Riecchia said. "I don't know what to do. My neighborhood called the police. The police came late. I can't believe it."

For Riecchia, the neighborhood has been slowly declining and the shooting was just another example of why.

A neighbor, who requested anonymity, said the shooting was out of line with what she had come to expect.

"This block is quiet. Everybody stayed in their house. We heard (about it) on the news. It was shocking to us," she said. "Nothing ever happens over here involving violence or anything like that. It's just sad. Everybody sticks to themselves. It's more older people on this side of the neighborhood. This whole generation has changed since I was growing up."

According to the Detroit Police, 13 fatal shootings were reported in 2006, all predominately committed by juveniles ages 16 and under.

"One important thing to remember is that a lot of these things start at home," said police spokesman James Tate. "That is why we have increased our Parental Responsibility Ordinance (PRO)."

The PRO was a moribund law, which has been in the books for more than a decade. It became active after the 2006 Mackenzie High School walkout during which students protested a shortage of books, and other educational facilities, as well as lack of bathroom tissue.

Under the PRO, parents could be charged for any "delinquent" behavior of their children under 17 that "interferes with the rights of others or menaces the welfare of the community."

"We issued over 750 parental ordinances last year," Tate said. "A parent is bound by law and by nature to take care of their children."

Out of the 750 PRO issued, 62 percent of parents refused to show up in court, according to Tate.

"The police department, we can only do so much," Tate said. "We have parents who turn a blind eye and others are at the point where they feel they can't do any more for their children."

Daniel W. Aldridge Jr., founder of African Men's Excellence Network (AMEN) has done his own work to provide an answer to violence affecting Detroit youth.

"The death of these two young people was a tragedy not only for their families, but for all of us," Aldridge said. "All the children of the community are our children. The greatest challenge is the lack of outcry from the community. We've become desensitized. We're not doing anything about it. (Many have) picked up a jailhouse ethic (no snitching), and we're visiting a lot of pain on each other."

AMEN has been on the forefront of educating the community about violence against women, with a 90-minute DVD titled "No!"

“How do we make the emotional, physical and sexual violence against women unacceptable in Detroit?” Aldridge asked. “We’re trying to organize a major rally next year. Violence against women undermines the community. This is devastating and we have adopted a jailhouse ethic and therefore the community is left without any protection whatsoever. We must organize and mobilize ourselves to deal with this matter.”

Community policing is key to dealing with some of the violence in the community, some say. If trust between officers and the community is properly nurtured, it could spot and effectively deal with crime.

But Tate admitted that the recent incident involving Detroit Sgt. Roosevelt Tidwell, who is accused of forcing a couple to have sex in Chandler Park on Detroit’s east side, while he masturbated complicates that trust.

“The allegation helps erode that trust,” Tate said. “As terrible as the allegations are we are talking about a few.” Tate said the police do a good job but most of the time don’t receive credit.

Weusi (pronounced “way-oooh-see”) Olusola, president and program director of Pioneers for Peace, watched his hoop dreams fade away when he was shot almost 21 years ago. He was 16.

He wasn’t directly involved in any drug activity, he just happened to have friends who were involved and was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Olusola was featured in the award-winning documentary “Wasted Dreams,” which summed up his life at that time and the lives of many who have experienced violence firsthand.

“I’ve heard conversations after (the shooting) happened. I was hearing things like ‘they shouldn’t have been up in there,’” Olusola said. “I think, where were the adults?”

Part of why he started Pioneers for Peace was to fill the gap with regard to how violence is presented to children, including by the media. His accident left him in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down. It is the “other side” of violence – the seldom seen consequences.

“We (Pioneers) consider ourselves to be a greater good that has sprung from that tumultuous violence in the city. One of the things we’re trying to do is to get our people out of the victim mode,” he said.

All of the members are either paralyzed or blind, but that doesn’t stop them from rallying in the community for change.

Earlier this year, Moné Little, granddaughter of Temptations great David Ruffin, was shot on Boxwood on Jan. 28 while with her boyfriend. A former student of Oakland Community College, her death was just one of many cases of gun violence taking away the lives of Detroit’s youth.

Olusola said the new generation doesn’t have enough advocates to provide a viable contrast for inner city youth, who often idolize rap stars and basketball players.

“The mainstream is kind of dictating the tides. Kids are looking up to the rappers and the hoopers. We need to make the activists look sexy (like the Black Panther Party in the ’60s),” Olusola said. “Billions of dollars are being made out of our misery and self-destruction.”

For more information on Pioneers for Peace, visit www.pioneersforpeace.org. To see the DVD “No!” you may e-mail Weusi Olusola at dan3132@sbcglobal.net.



Bad Axe woman to face trial in shooting death of husband

Friday, May 11, 2007

THE SAGINAW NEWS

BAD AXE -- A jury will decide whether a Bad Axe woman acted in self-defense when she shot and killed her husband, whom authorities say had a long history of abusive behavior.

Huron County District Judge Karl K. Kraus concluded a Wednesday preliminary hearing by ruling sufficient evidence exists for Marilyn F. Lassiter to go to trial.

Lassiter, 51, will face a Circuit Court arraignment Tuesday, May 29, on a single count of homicide/manslaughter with intent but without malice and possessing a firearm while committing a felony. The homicide charge is a 15-year felony while the weapons charge is a two-year offense.

Investigators have said Lassiter used an unregistered Smith & Wesson .357-caliber revolver to kill Lionel G. Lassiter on Dec. 12 at the couple's home on Limerick near Champagne in Chandler Township, north of Elkton. Lionel Lassiter, 64, died of a single shot to the head.

Huron County Prosecutor Mark A. Gaertner has said the shooting occurred after Lionel Lassiter became angry because his wife had not put away groceries or had taken a nap, Saginaw News records show.

Gaertner said Lionel Lassiter had a history of violence, including a 2002 conviction on a charge of assault with intent to do great bodily harm stemming from the shooting of his brother-in-law in Macomb County. v

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FRIDAY MAY 11, 2007 Last modified: *Thursday, May 10, 2007 4:35 PM EDT*

Shooting leads to prison

An Adrian man admitted to shooting his girlfriend in the leg while drunk.

By [Dennis Pelham](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — A 42-year-old man who admitted shooting an estranged girlfriend in the leg during an argument in November was sent to prison Wednesday in Lenawee County Circuit Court, and he pledged to live a sober life in the future.

Marvin George Parker Jr. of Adrian said he was drunk when he beat a former girlfriend then pulled a handgun and shot her twice in the leg the night of Nov. 21. The incident happened at the woman's home on Vine Street in Adrian.

The penalty handed down for those actions is a minimum of five years in prison to a maximum of 12 years.

"I do take full responsibility for my actions and my poor choices," Parker told Judge Harvey A. Koselka. "I handled these problems completely wrong."

Parker said he has been a productive member of society for many years. He said he has two sons in college and a third graduating from high school. He also served as a coach in a Pop Warner football program for five years.

"I do have a plan to succeed by living a sober life," he said. "I am very serious about changing my life."

Defense attorney Sam Molaro told the court Parker has a good record except for times when alcohol has turned his behavior bad. He asked the court to consider handing down a sentence close to the 19-month minimum prison term allowed by state guidelines in the case.

"Even the victim indicated in her letter that when he's not drinking, when he's not intoxicated, he is a very good person," Molaro said. "In this instance he became violent. He's just got to get away from the alcohol."

Koselka noted that Parker has two prior misdemeanors that involve assaultive behavior and a felony concealed weapons conviction in 1991. Reading from a report of the November incident, Koselka said Parker pulled a .380-caliber handgun and shot his estranged girlfriend in the thigh and in the calf. He also punched her in the face and hit her in the head with a wooden plank, he said.

Koselka handed down the maximum 38-month to 10-year prison term under state guidelines in Parker's case for his conviction for assault with intent to do great bodily harm. He also ordered that Parker first serve a mandatory two years for possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony before beginning the assault sentence. He was allowed credit for 169 days he has served so far in jail.

Parker was originally charged with assault with intent to murder carrying a maximum life prison term before pleading guilty to the reduced assault and firearm charges.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Report: We're healthier, sort of

County residents meet most health department goals

Thursday, May 10, 2007

BY TRACY DAVIS

News Staff Reporter

Washtenaw County residents have made progress in more than half the health goals set by the county two years ago, but showed signs of worsening in almost a quarter of the areas measured.

The county's Public Health Department issued a "report card" that charts the progress made by county residents in meeting health goals set forth in 2005 objectives.

Twenty-five of the 43 objectives had been met or were moving in the right direction - including increasing rates of women getting mammograms, decreasing the number of adults who smoke, and decreasing rates of HIV infection, the report said.

But almost a quarter of the objectives showed signs of declining, such as the African-American infant death rate, child abuse rates, domestic violence rates and chlamydia rates in adults 20 and older. In addition, the percentage of adults at a healthy weight and who engage in moderate physical activity for 30 or more minutes five to seven days per week appears to be moving in the wrong direction, the report said. Adreanne Waller, senior health analyst for the county, said some of the figures were surprising, but some areas like domestic violence may reflect increasing rates of reporting. The objectives for the upcoming 2020 survey will focus more on social determinants such as poverty, education and where people live, she said.

Another nine goals showed no change, were unclear, or there was no new data.

Keven Mosley-Koehler, coordinator of the county's health improvement plan, said she was pleased with the overall results.

But, she said, "Levels of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use remain relatively unchanged across the county, and we're still seeing the tremendous health impact that limited exercise, obesity, and asthma have on our communities."

The county's health improvement plan was started in 1995, and objectives for 2005 were established then. Periodic surveys help to measure the effectiveness of community health programs.

Survey data are now available to the public on the county's Web site at <http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>.

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May 11, 2007

Health care ballot initiative in works

Group wants voters to OK amendment that would force lawmakers to reform state's system.

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

A grassroots group is in the early stages of a ballot initiative that would ask voters to approve a constitutional amendment requiring the Legislature to reform the state's health care system.

The initiative, planned for November 2008, would require lawmakers to find a way to cover the state's 1.5 million uninsured residents, make health care plans more efficient and control the rapid growth of health care costs.

"We wouldn't be telling the Legislature what to do, we would be telling them to act," said John Freeman, director of America Votes Michigan, who previously led the effort to increase the state's minimum wage. "This is the kind of issue that cuts across every single constituent. We need health care reform in this state."

Spearheaded by the Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network, the initiative was conceived after a Massachusetts grassroots group used a similar strategy. The proposed Massachusetts ballot measure had such wide support that the governor and lawmakers enacted legislation reforming the state's health care system, Freeman said.

So far, Michigan strategists have come up with ballot language, said Gary Benjamin, a board member of the Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network. The next step is to raise funds to conduct public opinion surveys and hire staff to collect the 400,000 signatures necessary to get the measure on the November 2008 ballot. Signature collection may begin in January.

The measure is endorsed by several faith-based groups, labor and civil rights organizations, but some health leaders are worried the initiative might interfere with Gov. Jennifer Granholm's effort to provide health care to the uninsured, Benjamin said. But Granholm's effort - which is seeking federal approval to use Medicaid dollars differently -- would only cover half of the state's uninsured population.

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Community to stock food banks

Friday, May 11, 2007

MARISA GWIDT

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Mid-Michigan postal workers will pick up more than outgoing letters on their mail routes Saturday.

They're counting on residents to line the streets with nonperishable and mailbox-positioned food items for the 15th annual National Association of Letter Carriers food drive.

With a collection goal of 80,000 pounds, Letter Carriers Branch 74 at 3175 Christy Way is seeking volunteers to help carry the donated food, particularly along walking routes.

"Hopefully there won't be any rain," said Lori Wilson, second-year food drive coordinator for Branch 74. Saturday's forecast calls for a slight chance of rain and a high of 64.

Although Wilson said there were too many volunteers to count last year, she said even more are needed this year. Retirees and children who need community service credit for school have signed up for Saturday's event, she said.

Last year's food drive amassed 79,410 pounds despite controversy about where the food was ending up. Several community members complained that the food went to Flint for storage.

"I am happy to report that all the food will be staying in Saginaw this year," Wilson said. "Everything is going much smoother this year. We've been getting a lot of positive feedback, and it's just a better atmosphere because there isn't any controversy."

A United Way-funded warehouse on West Michigan will provide space for food sorting and storage, and 16 food banks will pick up the food a month later.

Branch 74 allowed food banks one truck or van to pick up food in the past, but Wilson requested that they send two vehicles this year.

"The agencies will receive more food this way," Wilson said. "This is something new we're trying, and it should be more effective."

The East Side Soup Kitchen will participate. Teamsters Local 486 withheld its delivery trucks two years ago to protest the use of non-union labor in the construction of the Hunger Solution Center, 940 E. Genesee in Saginaw. The \$3 million facility gave the East Side Soup Kitchen and Hidden Harvest a new joint home.

"The membership voted, and we decided to give them food," Wilson said. "I feel very good about this decision."

The other recipients: Good Neighbors Mission, Neighborhood House, Emmaus House, Youth Services, Mustard Seed, Jeannine House, Saginaw Rescue Mission, West Michigan Avenue Southwest Area Emergency Food Pantry, Sheridan Road Baptist Church, Teen Parent Services, Teen Challenge, Safe Haven House, Underground Railroad, First Ward Community Center and Salvation Army.

"This event is great for the local community," Wilson said. "It is especially important now, when the economy is bad and so many houses are being foreclosed upon."

"It is always important to remember that out of every four people in a food pantry line, at least one of them is a child."

Saginaw's food drive is part of the National Association of Letter Carriers' national food drive, in which more

than 10,000 cities and towns across America participate. In 2006, the national drive collected a record 70.5 million pounds of food from postal customers, bringing the total for the first 14 years to 765.5 million pounds.

Anyone interested in volunteering for the Saginaw drive may contact Wilson at (989) 906-4661. v

Marisa Gwidt is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach her at 776-9716.

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Stamping out hunger

Mail carriers host food drive Saturday



CAPTION: Jane Nordberg/Daily Mining Gazette

Houghton letter carrier Mark Schnabel unloads food donations from his truck Thursday at the Houghton Post Office. Letter carriers around the Copper Country will be collecting food during their regular mail delivery routes on Saturday.

By JANE NORDBERG, DMG Writer

HOUGHTON — When Houghton mail carrier Mark Schnabel heads out on his mail delivery route on Saturday, he hopes to come back with a truckload full of soup, canned vegetables and macaroni and cheese.

May 12 marks the date for this year's "Stamp out Hunger" drive conducted by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Area residents are asked to place a nonperishable food donation in a bag by their mailbox Saturday before their mail is delivered. Letter carriers will be collecting the food donations and delivering them to a local food bank or pantry.

Since Houghton picked up the national program 12 years ago, Schnabel has been the Stamp Out Hunger coordinator for the Houghton post office and its surrounding area. Clay Hixson at the Calumet Post Office and Mark Normand in Hancock coordinate their respective regions.

"Between the larger cities and the rural carriers, we're able to cover the whole Copper Country," Schnabel said. "We couldn't do it without the support of the letter carriers in the more rural areas."

Typically, Calumet collects approximately 10,000 pounds of food during the drive, Houghton collects approximately 8,500 pounds and Hancock collects about 5,000 pounds, Schnabel said.

Normand said he had a challenge in Hancock, because the high school hosts a drive only weeks before the annual letter carriers' drive.

"We don't get as much as Calumet or Houghton, but people are still very generous and we do get truckloads," said Normand, who has been a letter carrier for 10 years but is in his first year as coordinator.

All of the food collected gets distributed locally. Normand said the Hancock Post Office splits its donations between the Salvation Army and St. Vincent De Paul, Calumet gives to a local church

for distribution, and Houghton's collections go to the Community Action Agency food bank on Sharon Avenue.

"The charities say that more and more people each year need our help," Schnabel said. "Food and gas prices are going up, and more people on fixed incomes are coming in for assistance."

Saturday's drive is a labor of love for many letter carriers, Schnabel said. "We get a lot of volunteers, the postmasters come in, retirees and their families — everybody comes in to help," he said. "It's a very worthy cause."

In addition to non-perishable food, donations can also be paper goods such as paper towels or tissues. Letter carriers prefer food in cans and plastic bottles rather than glass, and there should be no expired food or partially-opened containers.

Mail delivery might be a little earlier on Saturday, Schnabel said, but if someone wants to make a donation after Saturday, they have a second chance.

Carriers will also be picking up food on Monday's mail delivery routes. Donations are also be made at the local post office through Monday.

For details, visit **www.helpstampouthunger.com**



Grant Moratorium Hurting Local Charities

Reporter: Lauren Zakalik

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The state is temporarily withholding grant payments to some state-funded organizations. That may cause one local group to go into debt.

"Forty-five days is a long time to go hungry or not pay your bills," says Susan Shoultz, executive director of Eve Inc., a local battered women's shelter.

But that's the reality now for the charity, which houses the abused women and their families. The Governor has placed a 45-day moratorium on the money her organization, and others like it, need to survive.

"The money is there. It has our name on it. It's in a bank account, and we can't have it," Shoultz laments. ☐

State and federal grants contribute \$300,000 to Eve Inc.'s annual budget. That money is used for things like food, beds and counseling for the countless women the organization serves.

However, Budget Office Spokesman Greg Bird says the Governor has little other choice than to delay payments until the budget is figured out.

"We're certainly sympathetic with the individuals who are recipients of the grants," Bird says, "But this is one of the ways the state has to address the budget crisis and the cash flow crisis."

Even after the 45 days of the Governor's grant moratorium have expired, it's still unclear if organizations like Eve Incorporated will receive their funds.

"Some will, some may not," Bird says.

Organizations that fall under certain categories, like protecting the health and welfare of Michigan citizens, are most likely to get the funds. But nothing is set in stone.

"Our office is there to serve victims," Shoultz says.

But they can't help but feel like victims themselves, the latest to be hurt by the unanswered budget crisis.

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A GROWING NEED: Southeast Michigan's Salvation Army is assisting more suburbanites than ever, but donations are up, too

May 11, 2007

BY CECILIA OLECK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Carol Sosnowski made a phone call this year she thought she'd never have to make.

It was to the Salvation Army in Pontiac, and it was to ask for help paying an overdue utility bill, about \$1,000.

The 50-year-old single mother was used to giving money to the group, not receiving it.

She had always been self-sufficient, first owning a school in Waterford and then working for the state as a foster care specialist.

But a car accident eight years ago left her with a closed-head injury and on disability, unable to work. She's depleted her 401(k), IRA and savings accounts to cover medical expenses and raise her sons -- ages 21, 20 and 12. She's also had her 3,200-square-foot home in White Lake on the market for nearly two years, but hasn't been able to sell it.

"It got to the point where -- what do I do? Do I buy food or do I pay a utility bill?" says Sosnowski. "It was really difficult for me. ... I called and said I was embarrassed."

Salvation Army officials in southeast Michigan say they're seeing more people like Sosnowski -- suburbanites who had good jobs but have been laid off or forced to take pay cuts and now are turning in record numbers to the group for help getting food and paying bills.

Though the Salvation Army still serves more people overall in the city of Detroit, need in the suburbs is a growing problem, says John Hale, interim development director for the Salvation Army Eastern Michigan Division.

In 2006, the army served 870,312 people in Detroit, a decrease of about 3% from the year before. But the group served 269,274 people in the suburbs, nearly triple the number helped in 2005, according to the army's annual Poverty Report, which was released this week.

It's the most people the army has ever served in southeast Michigan -- and it's not who you'd expect.

"A lot of people have this mindset that we're only helping older gentlemen," says Hale. "That's just not true anymore. I've met doctors, lawyers, college professors and lots and lots of kids."

Many of those in need of aid have been laid off from jobs in the service or auto industries, but many are workers who struggle to make ends meet because they are making less money than they used to, says Maj. Glen Caddy, commander of the Royal Oak Corps Community Center.

Higher gas and utility prices increase the pressure on those workers, as do high mortgages and vehicle leases.

"When we walk out of our front doors, we look at the neighborhoods, we see the relatively well-kept yards and late-model vehicles. ... If I'm doing OK and I see my neighbor there, I think they're doing OK, too. And that's just not the case," says Capt. Jim Irvine, head of the Plymouth Corps Community Center, which also serves Belleville, Canton and Northville.

Reluctant to ask for help

For many of those approaching the Salvation Army, it is the first time they've ever needed to ask for financial help. They often hesitate to let friends and coworkers know of their need.

"They hate coming in here," says Bill Moritz, director of social services for the Plymouth community center. "Believe me, they'd much rather come in here and say, 'Here's some money to help other people.' "

Many have been asking for food or help with utility or mortgage payments, says Moritz.

Last year the center in Plymouth helped about 75 families and individuals pay utility bills. Since January, Moritz says, the center has helped about 200 families and given away all of the \$65,000 earmarked to help with utility payments this year. The average bill is about \$1,100.

Part of the problem for many of those seeking help is that though they may have lost jobs or taken pay cuts, they still own vehicles or homes, making their net worth appear high.

"They're having a hard time getting help through the state because of their assets, which they can't afford," says Moritz.

That's been the case for Sosnowski, who says she's been trying to move into more affordable housing, but the glutted housing market has made it impossible to sell her home.

Turning to the group that Sosnowski had known only as the organization that rang bells outside of stores at Christmastime was an eye-opening experience.

The group offers an array of services in metro Detroit -- providing food to homeless and hungry people on its Bed and Bread trucks and through food pantries; offering drug and alcohol rehabilitation; running homeless shelters and children's sports, music and character-building programs, and providing legal aid, rent and utility bill assistance, church services and disaster relief.

The group also refers people to other aid organizations -- such as Lutheran Social Services, the Red Cross and Catholic Social Services -- if it is unable to help.

Metro Detroit donations increase

If there is a silver lining to the situation, it is that while the Salvation Army has helped record numbers of people in the past year, it has also received record donations, says Maj. Norman Marshall, the Salvation Army's commander in eastern Michigan.

In 2005, the latest year for which numbers are available, the Salvation Army in metro Detroit raised nearly \$61 million, an 18% increase over the previous year.

The increase is due in part to the army's focus on diversifying and expanding its donor base, according to Marshall.

"It is remarkable when you think that ... certainly the plight here is not good, but we're just amazed -- we've been very encouraged by the generosity," he says.

While asking for money from the group was difficult, Sosnowski says she is thankful for the help and the dignified way she was treated.

"My 12-year-old even said to me, 'Mom, that's who you always have us give money to!' " she says. "And yes, that's who we always give money to -- or had."

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Kalamazoo Gazette Live

Friday, May 11, 2007

Signs of progress in state capitol

A budget-balancing agreement may be near, legislative leaders suggest.

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LANSING — Government leaders are preparing to meet through the weekend as they push toward an agreement to balance Michigan's budget.

"We began the budget process \$800 million apart and through compromise we have narrowed that gap considerably," Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, a Republican from Rochester, said in a statement.

"The people of this state need, expect and deserve a resolution to this matter. We are committed to closing the books by next week so that we can begin the necessary reforms for 2008."

The state faces an estimated \$700 million shortfall for the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30. Cuts in school aid and Medicaid payments could begin June 1 unless some other deal is made to resolve the budget problems.

The main dispute has been that many Democrats, led by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, want some sort of tax increase as part of a budget-balancing strategy. Republicans generally have opposed tax increases.

But Thursday, it appeared the two sides might be inching toward some sort of common ground — for the current fiscal year, at least — with an agreement possibly reached by next week.

-- Associated Press

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Published May 11, 2007
[From Lansing State Journal]

Friday's letters to the editor

Cut welfare rolls

As Election Day approached us back in November, some of us were confused on who to vote for as our governor. I think at the time, the better of the two evils prevailed.

However, now she is out of money. Why? Where has it all gone? I don't think anyone understands, especially the people working for the state. Nor do they understand why they have to work 20 days without pay so Gov. Jennifer Granholm can save money.

How much sense does this make, when there are people out there refusing to work and living off of state assistance? Why haven't we cut them off yet? Instead, let's cut money from schools by providing \$125 less per student. That's smart.

Why doesn't Granholm try taking a pay cut?

Jana Corey
Lansing



An adoption law for the real world

May 11, 2007

BY BRIAN DICKERSON

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

The House Judiciary Committee has approved a bill that adoption lawyers say could help thousands of Michigan foster children find permanent homes within a few years.

In the next few weeks, we'll learn whether the rest of the state Legislature cares as much about those children as it does about making cheap political points with opponents of gay marriage.

Under current Michigan law, only married couples and singles are eligible to become adoptive parents. House Bill 4259 would broaden that eligibility to include unmarried partners. Among other things, the proposed amendment to Michigan's adoption code would enable single parents to formally enlist their partners as stepparents, even if they were unable or unwilling to wed.

Some groups who supported the 2004 initiative to outlaw gay marriage in Michigan contend that 4259 is nothing more than an attempt to subvert the ban, which voters adopted by an overwhelming margin. But the Michigan Catholic Conference, which lobbied energetically for the gay marriage ban, has opted not to oppose the adoption amendment, enhancing its prospects for passage.

Apples and oranges

The church's neutrality underlines the fact that adoption and gay marriage are separate issues, practically as well as legally. Thousands of Michigan children already are raised by same-sex parents or unmarried heterosexual ones. The adoption bill pending before the House wouldn't sanction the relationships between those partners, but it would allow children who share their households to enjoy the benefits of a legal relationship with both partners.

State Rep. Paul Condino, D-Southfield, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and HB 4259's primary sponsor, says he was persuaded to introduce it after watching unmarried hospice patients frustrated in their attempts to provide for their children.

Dr. Kathleen Blumer, who practices pediatric medicine in West Bloomfield, told Condino's committee the adoption bill would extend medical coverage to un- and under-insured children. "To some of you, these families might be an abstraction or a moral puzzle or an outrage," she testified Wednesday. "To me these are living, breathing, beautiful children who deserve all of the cultural support we can give them."

A slippery slope?

But Tim Schmig, who testified on behalf of the Michigan Association of Christian Schools, warned that extending eligibility to unmarried partners would set a precedent that could lead to adoption by incestuous couples.

The anxiety expressed by Schmig and other opponents put me in mind of John LeCarre's "The Russia House," in which a British spy sabotages a dubious undercover operation against the crumbling Soviet Union to save the lives of his Russian collaborators.

"Not a bad deal," the spy's disappointed handler concedes afterward. "Real people for unreal arguments."

Michigan lawmakers, too, can salvage real children, and all it will cost them is the resentment of a few wounded ideologues. It's a trade they shouldn't hesitate to make.

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